

Police surprised by huge turnout

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Denver police said they expected at most only a couple thousand people at Saturday's protest against proposed changes in federal immigration law at Civic Center park.

They never anticipated the 50,000 people that police say actually showed up.

"It caught everybody off-guard," said Denver police spokesman Sonny Jackson.

Traffic traveling through intersections surrounding Broadway and Colfax Avenue came to a screeching halt around noon as thousands of protestors walked to the rally that began at 10 a.m. in front of the Greek Amphitheater in Civic Center park. The rally stretched to the west steps of the state Capitol.

Jackson said police have not seen a crowd this large since the Denver Broncos' last Super Bowl win in 1999. He was equally amazed with how peaceful it was. No one was arrested.

"It was a very respectful protest group," Jackson said. "They were very compliant with safety issues. They respected the community."

The rally was organized less than two weeks ago.

Spanish-language television and radio stations helped get out the word, according to rally volunteer Ida Sandoval.

Sandoval said she worked with police before the event to ensure that the protest would be safe. While the crowd was much larger than expected, there were no skirmishes.

Police officers from other districts in Denver helped with security and made sure everything went smoothly.

Jackson did not say how many police were at the event, but it did not appear that there were a lot of officers on hand, considering the size of the crowd.

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